

## A LIST OF SNAKES FROM MESOPOTAMIA.

COLLECTED BY MEMBERS OF THE MESOPOTAMIAN EXPEDITIONARY  
FORCE, 1915 TO 1919.

BY

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WITH FIELD NOTES BY CAPT. C. M. INGOLDBY.

## TYPHLOPIDÆ.

1. *Typhlops braminus*, Daud.

Basra (Lieut.-Col. F. Wall).

*Habitat*: Southern Asia; Islands of the Indian Ocean; South Africa; Mexico (probably transported by human agency).

## GLAUCONIIDÆ.

2. *Glauconia macrorhynchus*, Jan.

Faleya, Euphrates (Capt. H. T. Mackenzie).

*Habitat*: Algerian Sahara, Nubia, Mesopotamia, Persia.

## BOIDÆ.

3. *Eryx jaculus*, L.

Basra and Sheik Saad (Lt.-Col. F. Wall); Amara (Capt. P. A. Buxton); Shaiba (Lt. T. Livesey); Basra (Capt. C. R. Pitman); Bagdad (Capt. C. M. Ingoldby); Mesopotamia (Maj. Fitzgerald).

*Habitat*: North Africa, S. W. Asia, S. E. Europe.

Very common along the Tigris within a mile or so of the river especially near villages. Excepting *Trop. tessellatus*, the most commonly killed snake owing to his frequent appearance above ground in daylight and his sluggish movements. The largest I have measured was 2 feet 5¼ ins. in length.—C.M.I.

## COLUBRIDÆ.

4. *Tropidonotus tessellatus*, Laur.

Basra (Lt.-Col. F. Wall, Lt.-Col. F. P. Connor); Quelat Saleh below Amara, Sheik Saad, Haquicole on Euphrates near Hamar Lake (Capt. C. M. Ingoldby); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie); Zobeya (Capt. Pitman); Basra (Maj. C. Christy).

Numerous specimens, nearly all with a single upper labial shield (the fourth) entering the eye.

*Habitat*: Europe and Asia as far East as the extreme West of China and the extreme North-West of India, Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria and neighbouring parts of Sinai and Egypt.

Abundant wherever there is water. Major F. E. W. Venning who collected the specimens from the Hamar Lake, on the Euphrates, has told me that on warm days the shallow water edging the lake appears to be writhing with them.—C.M.I.

5. *Zamenis gemonensis*, Laur, var. *asianus*, Boettg.

Basra, Amara, Bagdad, Haquicole (Lt.-Col. F. Wall); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie); Basra (Maj. C. Christy).

*Habitat*: This form is known from Asia Minor, Rhodes, Cyprus, Syria and Persia.

This exceedingly handsome snake is found almost exclusively in the palm groves edging the rivers. It does not appear to acquire its pure black coloration until over 4 feet in length.

It is a swiftly moving creature, climbing palm trees with ease and biting with accuracy and animus when handled.

I have found lizard remains in the stomach of one; the usual diet however is certainly snakes. Near Bagdad, the only place where I had the opportunity of observing them in any numbers, the victim in the great majority of cases was *Tarbophis iberus*. One specimen kept in captivity for several weeks ate voraciously any small snake offered (usually *Zam. dahlia* or *Zam. ventrimaculatus*) eventually dying as a result of attempting to swallow too large a specimen of the latter. They are thirsty creatures drinking often and copiously from a saucer, occasionally immersing the whole mouth in the process—C. M. I.

6. *Zamenis dahlia*, Fitz.

Bagdad (Capt. Ingoldby).

*Habitat*: S. E. Europe, Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, N.-W. Persia Cyprus, Syria.

This most slender and beautiful snake is common in the palm groves, frequenting the young thorny palm bushes where it can feed in reasonable safety. Its food seems to be chiefly insects, occasionally small lizards.

Active in day-time only. All specimens refused food in captivity—C.M.I.

7. *Zamenis ventrimaculatus*, Gray.

Basra, Twin Canals at Sheik Saada, Esra's Tomb between Quarrah and Amara (Lt.-Col. Wall); Shaiba (Lt. Livesey); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie); Zobeya (Capt. Pitman); Bagdad (Capt. Ingoldby); Samash (Maj. Lane); Baquba, N.-E. of Bagdad (E. W. E. Wouterz); Sheik Saad (Sir P. Z. Cox), Basra (Maj. C. Christy).

*Habitat*: From the Euphrates to Kashmir and N.-W. India.

An active snake, most frequently met with on the desert at considerable distances from water. The colour harmonises perfectly with the baked earth of its surroundings—C.M.I.

8. *Zamenis diadema*, Schlg.

Basra, Bagdad, Twin Canals at Sheik Saad (Lt.-Col. Wall); Shaiba (Lt. Livesey); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie); Zobeya (Capt. Pitman); Nasiryah (Lt. Livesey); Baquba (E. W. E. Wouterz); Daur (Capt. W. M. Logan Home).

*Habitat*: From the Sahara and Arabia to Kashmir and N. W. India.

Very common throughout at any rate lower Mesopotamia. The markings of the young persist in adult life—C.M.I.

9. *Lytorhynchus diadema*, D. and B.

Shaiba (Lt. Livesey); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie); Awaz (Capt. E. S. Hearn).

*Habitat*: From the Algerian Sahara to Arabia, Syria and Persia.

10. *Contia collaris*, Mén.

Bagdad (Lt.-Col. Wall).

*Habitat*: Caucasus, Mesopotamia, Persia. A specimen from Muscat is preserved in the Collection of the Bombay Natural History Society. I now regard *C. modesta*, Mart. with the scales in 17 rows, as a distinct species.

11. *Contia coronella*, Schlg.

Shaiba, Zobeya (Lt. Livesey); Faleya (Capt. Mackenzie).

*Habitat*: Was known from Syria and S. W. Persia.

12. *Tarbophis iberus*, Eichw.

Bagdad (Capt. Ingoldby): Mesopotamia (Capt. Mackenzie).

The 6 specimens in the collection have the scales in 21 rows, as in Wall's *T. tessellatus* (J. Bomb. N. H. Soc. XVIII, 1908, p. 802) from S. W. Persia, of which I have examined the type and which I cannot separate from *T. iberus*\*

*Habitat*: Caucasus, Mesopotamia, S. W. Persia.

Moves chiefly by night. Usually extremely sluggish and placid, allowing itself to be picked up and handled without protest. One which I had kept in a small box for two days before transfer to a cage was on removal exceedingly aggressive, hissing and biting vigorously. The largest I found was coiled in a bunch of dates, at midday, on the top of a tall palm.—C.M.I.

13. *Cælopetis monspessulana*, Herm.

Bagdad (Lt.-Col. Wall, Capt. Ingoldby).

*Habitat*: Borders of the Mediterranean, eastwards to the Caucasus and Persia.

Fairly common near Bagdad whenever vegetation is fairly dense.

Lives in holes, usually at the roots of bushes or palms. Most active at night, but not infrequently seen moving in the shade by day, during the great heat. Markings pretty constant, ground colour varying from bluish gray to dark olive brown in specimens of equal size—C.M.I.

14. *Cælope tis moilensis*, Reuss.

Sodom, Sheik Saad (Capt. Ingoldby); Shaiba (Lt. Livesey).

*Habitat*: Northern Sahara, from Algeria to Egypt and Nubia, Arabia, Western Persia.

One specimen sent me by Capt. Cheesman from Sodom near Sheikh Saad. The skin between the dorsal scales is orange or bright brick-red colour. On being disturbed the creature dilates its neck somewhat, producing a striking appearance of a vivid flush as if the neck were aglow—C.M.I.

15. *Psammophis schokari*, Forsk.

Basra (Lt.-Col. Wall); Shaiba (Lt. Livesey).

*Habitat*: Borders of the Sahara, Arabia, Syria, Persia, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Sind.

16. *Naia morgani*, Mocquard.

Shaiba (Lt. Livesey); Mesopotamia (Capt. Mackenzie).

*Habitat*: Previously known from Persia.

When Wall's description of *Atractaspis wilsoni* appeared in this Journal (XVIII, 1908, p. 804, fig.). I concluded that his snake was identical with Mocquard's *Naia morgani* (Bull. Mus. Paris, 1905, p. 78), and I entered it in my notes as a synonym of that species, a conclusion fully confirmed by a comparison with Wall's type specimen kindly entrusted to me by Mr. Kinnear. *Naia morgani* is well characterized by its larger rostral, the internasals separated from the præfrontals, the parietals bordered on the outer side by 3 or 4 temporals, and the entire anal. The Mesopotamian specimens have 23 scales across the neck and 21 across the body. Uniform blackish brown, a little paler beneath.

Wall's *Melanoseps macphersoni* (Journ. Bomb. N. H. Soc. XVII, 1906, p. 27, fig.), from the Aden Hinterland, is a synonym of my *Atractaspis andersonii* (Ann. and Mag. N. H. XVI, 1905, p. 180).

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\* *Typhlops wilsoni*, described as new in the same paper, is, in my opinion, a synonym of *T. vermicularis*, Merr.

VIPERIDÆ.

17. *Vipera lebetina*, L.

Bagdad (Lt.-Col. Wall); Aushuru (Lt.-Col. H. D. Piele).

*Habitat*: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Cyclades, Cyprus, and South Western Asia from Syria and Asia Minor to Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir.

18. *Cerastes cornutus*, L.

Basra (Lt.-Col. Wall); Shaiba (Lt. Livesey).

All the specimens, six in number, lack the horn-like scale above the eye whence the species derives its name and which is more frequently present than absent in North African individuals.

*Habitat*: Borders of the Sahara, Arabia and Palestine. Had not been previously recorded from Mesopotamia.

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